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President:	Nana Akufo-Addo	(Ghana)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Cheng Lie
	Congo	Mr. Okio
	Denmark	Mrs. Wandel
	France	Mr. Serman
	Greece	Mr. Papadopoulos
	Japan	Mr. Kitagawa
	Peru	Mr. Ruiz Rosas
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Sitnikov
	Slovakia	Mr. Marton
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Whineray
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Nelson

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/610)

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06-46124 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Liberia, Niger and Pakistan in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

I wish to remind all speakers, as I indicated at the morning session, to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Guatemala, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Skinner-Klee (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating the Republic of Ghana on its presidency of the Security Council this month. It is an honour to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs of your country, Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, chairing the meeting. We welcome the initiative to discuss peace consolidation in West Africa, because it enables us, in the Council and in general, to review the situation prevailing in the countries of that important subregion of Africa, in order to contribute to finding comprehensive solutions to the various challenges facing the region. In that context, we welcome the presence and support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Ould-Abdallah, as well as the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Ibn Chambas.

Guatemala has closely observed the violent conflicts involving various countries of that region of Africa. Guatemala itself experienced an internal conflict that lasted four decades, and we understand the urgent need to strive for peace, stability and development. We also understand the importance of regional cooperation and the benefits of strengthening integration mechanisms.

At no other time in the past have we been as close to establishing a favourable environment for the creation and strengthening of international capacities and for articulating strategies that will help to achieve sustainable development in the region. The revitalization of ECOWAS and its links with the African Union, the way in which it works with the help of the United Nations and the support of other international actors are steps in the right direction for these efforts and thus, bode well for a better future for the people of the region.

We are glad that the document circulated for this meeting (S/2006/610) has acknowledged the need to strengthen and bolster that kind of concerted action. Guatemala strongly supports the high-level meetings of the United Nations Secretariat and regional organizations, as well as the creation of the Standing Committee. We believe those will help keep us focused in the correct strategic direction and offer general guidance on the practical level. We must now take care of those mechanisms to ensure that they are effective, binding and flexible and that they always act in keeping with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

We must remember that security matters are of a priority nature, and cooperation in military and political areas should be sustained and coordinated. However, we believe that cooperation should go further and should try to address the precarious humanitarian situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in the regions. The synergy between ECOWAS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in that area seems to be a sound approach.

We also attach similar importance to another joint effort that we believe will contribute to peace consolidation in the region, namely, the cooperation among United Nations entities that are designed to harmonize disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, while taking into account the special needs of women and children as the most vulnerable individuals, as well as the disabled.

Good governance, the strengthening of justice systems and the formulation and pursuit of human rights policies will not be possible without strengthening national capacities and keeping those capacities up-to-date. Here too, we see a special role for actors in the region, who should supplement United Nations actions aimed at continued identification of the priorities and actions needed for the elaboration of effective strategies and programmes to overcome challenges and contribute to the region's development. In that connection, we welcome what appears to be a Council practice: the incorporation of elements anticipating that need within the framework of peacekeeping operations.

I should like to refer briefly to the role of development of the Peacebuilding Commission, which, following its initial organizational and informational meetings, must provide concrete follow-up to actions needed to stimulate peace consolidation and attain the wider objective of sustainable development in the region.

Given the experience acquired through the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African countries emerging from conflict, we believe it is important that the Peacebuilding Commission cooperate proactively not only in the important work of mobilizing international cooperation, but also in helping national authorities establish priorities and devise realistic strategies and coherent policies adapted to the circumstances and environment of each country.

We must bear in mind that peace consolidation is not achieved only by preventing outbreaks of violence or physically rebuilding a country or its legal framework. The Peacebuilding Commission must go further and support comprehensive changes that eliminate practices leading to social, economic and political exclusion and transform State institutions so that citizens can regain confidence in them and participate in them.

Therefore, the cooperation that the Peacebuilding Commission can provide to the Security Council should be to offer a mechanism to follow up on the initial work of maintaining peace and security, in which all actors involved in a particular transition and recovery process can interact openly and transparently, addressing the broader areas involved in peace consolidation — areas in which the Economic and Social Council, in its particular area of responsibility, has tasks to accomplish. That would ultimately contribute to better interaction, coordination and coherence not only between the two Councils but also throughout the United Nations system.

Finally, Guatemala notes with satisfaction the recent creation of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, established by the Security Council in order to consolidate peace in that country, help the Government to strengthen human rights and achieve the Millennium Goals, improve transparency and cooperate with the country so that it can hold democratic elections in 2007. We have the same expectations for Côte d'Ivoire in October 2006.

Guatemala welcomes the developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau. Likewise, the positive changes that have occurred in Liberia are true examples of stability and strengthening in the region. These examples make us optimistic about the achievement of a promising future for all our brothers and sisters in the region.

The President: I now call on the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The following countries also align themselves with this statement: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The European Union welcomes this opportunity to exchange views and contribute to the process of consolidating peace in West Africa. The EU commends the considerable progress made in recent years in establishing peace and security in West Africa, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Liberia has held its first free and fair elections and has chosen Africa's first woman President to lead the country into reconstruction and recovery. Liberia's democratic Government has taken bold measures to improve the transparency of its budget. We welcome the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, which has already assisted in the partial lifting of sanctions. The arrest and trial of former President Taylor demonstrate that those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity or violations of

international humanitarian law cannot escape justice. The EU appreciates the essential work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and its vital contributions to the establishment of the rule of law in the region.

The European Union welcomes the request of Sierra Leone to be included on the agenda of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the Commission's positive response to that request. Sierra Leone will now benefit from the Commission's support for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery during the crucial time of the preparation of the June 2007 elections.

Notwithstanding those positive developments, many West African countries remain in precarious situations. The European Union remains concerned about the fragile political and socio-economic situation in Guinea-Bissau.

In neighbouring Guinea, the reform process has stalled. The EU strongly reiterates its call for the new Government to engage in a dialogue with all parties concerned in order to improve political stability and pave the way for democratic reform. The volatile situation in Côte d'Ivoire continues to hamper peace and stability in the region. The EU is concerned about the serious delays in the peace process, in particular in the implementation of the road map aimed at the scheduling of elections by the end of October this year. The stability of the entire West African region depends to a great extent on developments in Côte d'Ivoire.

The European Union adopted a comprehensive Strategy for Africa in December 2005. Within the framework of the Strategy, the EU is committed to strengthening the dialogue on peace and security in Africa and to supporting the efforts of its African partners to build stability on the continent. In line with the Strategy, the EU maintains an open dialogue with the African Union and with subregional organizations on a wide range of issues related to peace and security on the continent. Notably through its African Peace Facility, the EU actively supports institutional capacity-building in these areas.

A year earlier, in 2004, the European Union adopted its Strategy for West Africa on conflict prevention, management and resolution. The objective of the Strategy is to promote regional approaches to West African transnational problems and to improve coordination in close cooperation with the main partners active in the region.

The European Union is well aware that national solutions alone are not sufficient to address the security threats in West Africa, owing to the cross-border nature of problems such as small arms and light weapons, child solders, refugees, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, human trafficking and immigration. In addition to providing its support to each country of the region through national programmes, the EU is committed to a regional approach and to improved coordination with the key partners active in the region, namely, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Office for West Africa.

The European Union, as Co-Chair of the International Contact Group on the Mano River Basin, is also closely involved in a number of political dialogues in the region within the framework of the International Working Group on Côte d'Ivoire and looks forward to the first meeting of the International Working Group on Guinea-Bissau. The Special Representative of the European Union Presidency for the Mano River Union will ensure the continued promotion of peace and stability with political interlocutors in the region.

The European Union also engages in internal cooperation and coordination among its member States, relying on the coherent and harmonized use of various instruments at its disposal, such as political dialogue and development cooperation.

The European Union attaches special importance to the development of crisis prevention, management and resolution capabilities in Africa.

An EU Action Plan for support for peace and security in Africa under the European Security and Defence Policy was adopted in 2004. Using the full mix at its disposal, the EU combines European Commission development programmes and European Security and Defence Policy actions to support African capacity-building in the field of peace and security. Efforts are under way to further strengthen EU support to African capabilities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

Against that background, the EU continues to be fully engaged in conflict prevention and management in West Africa in support of regional organizations and the countries of West Africa in their efforts to enhance peace and stability.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Namibia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Shiweva (Namibia): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa and commend you and your delegation for this important initiative. We also thank you for the thoughtful concept paper (S/2006/610, annex) that forms the basis of the Council's deliberations today.

Namibia believes that peace and stability in West Africa are fundamental to achieving sustainable development, not only in that subregion but also in Africa as a whole. It is in that context that Namibia continues to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions in that subregion, by contributing troops as well as military and civilian police observers.

We note with satisfaction the steady progress that has been made in Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, and we commend the role played by the United Nations, the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the international community in ensuring peace and security and laying the foundations for democracy and the rule of law. Functional Governments and democratic institutions have been established; improved health and education systems in these countries have also been put in place.

However, serious attention should be paid to the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants and the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees. Cooperation within and among the countries of the region is required for a successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. This should be done in a balanced, comprehensive and transparent manner. Peacebuilding efforts must focus on security, the rule of law and the provision of basic services and social and economic infrastructure.

We are happy to note that the newly created Peacebuilding Commission has agreed to focus its work on the situations in Sierra Leone and in Burundi. Its performance will be tested and judged upon the results of the consideration of those situations. It should, therefore, prove its ability and effectiveness in that daunting challenge before it.

With regard to Côte d'Ivoire, we are pleased to note that the Pretoria Agreement on the peace process in that country continues to be respected and adhered to by the parties in their implementation of their agreements. We are encouraged by the efforts of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union in bringing about a lasting solution to the problems in Côte d'Ivoire. We applaud the mediation role of President Mbeki of South Africa on behalf of the African Union and encourage continuous consultations with the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

However, we have doubts about the peacekeeping efforts in that country, particularly the command relations of the United Nations peacekeeping force on one hand and the international force on the other, to which the Government of Côte d'Ivoire has referred on several occasions. Furthermore, we are concerned about the fact that the elections in Côte d'Ivoire continue to be postponed. We are, however, hopeful that pre-election tasks such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, voter identification and registration, the designation of polling stations and polling officers and other related assignments will be completed in good time for peaceful and democratic elections to take place.

It must be emphasized that reconciliation is the key to sustainable peace. Reconciliation is a two-way process that should aim at forging a spirit of forgiveness rather than vengeance or retaliation. However, a distinct line has to be drawn between reconciliation and the search for justice. While we recognize that crimes committed during a conflict should be accounted for, we are also cognizant of the need for an independent, competent judicial system and an open trial process to be put in place, not to punish those who committed crimes, but to rehabilitate them and to correct the mistakes that were made. In this connection, my delegation fully supports the role and authority of the International Criminal Court, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. We further support their full utilization and funding.

As in any other conflict, the majority of those in West Africa who have suffered due to armed conflict are women and children. In that connection, we strongly believe that a post-conflict peacebuilding strategy and programmes should be designed for women, children and girls, especially in the areas of education and employment creation.

While we fully agree that Africa should take the lead in finding solutions to Africa's problems, we wish to reiterate that the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, should not abdicate its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. In that regard, we call for the strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in promoting durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Democratically elected Governments should be supported and strengthened. Furthermore, the DDR of former combatants should be completed within established time frames and all former combatants should be placed in the socio-economic mainstream of society. We are hopeful, in this regard, that the Peacebuilding Commission will fill the gap by exerting and coordinating peacebuilding efforts in countries emerging from conflict.

We urge the United Nations agencies dealing with Africa to assist the AU and subregional organizations in promoting good governance, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Enhancing the capacity of the AU in conflict prevention, management and resolution is of paramount importance.

Finally, my delegation would like to underscore that greater investment should be made in conflict prevention, as we believe that conflict prevention is cost-effective, in terms of both saving lives and financial resources. Let us, therefore, strive to establish an early warning system that will enable us to detect the signs of conflict and address them head-on before the real conflict occurs.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Egypt, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great personal pleasure, Sir, to see you presiding over the Security Council today as head of Ghanaian diplomacy and to read out to the Security Council a statement by His Excellency Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who, due to the situation in the Middle East, is unfortunately unable to participate in this important meeting in person, in response to your kind invitation. His statement reads as follows.

> "Mr. President, I wish to express to you personally and to the Government of sisterly Ghana my gratitude and appreciation for your initiative in calling for this important meeting of the Security Council at the ministerial level to debate peace consolidation in West Africa, which is a significant component of our efforts to achieve peace and stability in the African continent and of the maintenance of international peace and security. This initiative, taken together with that of the United Republic of Tanzania last January on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, testifies to the importance that African countries attach to assuming a leading role in the settlement of their regional and subregional problems and to contributing effectively to meeting the aspirations of both Africa and the international community.
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> "Egypt is strongly committed to working with its brothers and sisters in Africa to achieve peace, stability and development. As a current member of the African Union's Peace and Security Council and the Organizational Committee of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, Egypt attaches great importance to reinforcing the regional approach in addressing peace consolidation. To that end, Egypt believes in the need to develop and strengthen the institutional partnership between the African Union and the African subregional organizations on the one hand, and the United Nations on the other.
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> "However, in order to ensure the success of such institutional relationships and to increase its potential to achieve its objectives, the requisite partnership must be based on a comprehensive vision for peace consolidation that addresses the concept of peace in an integrated manner, including the security, political, development, cultural, social, and human dimensions and ensuring the coordination of the efforts and roles of all influential actors. All that should be founded on the principles and purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. Such a comprehensive approach to peace is the only sure way to prevent conflict and relapse into conflict, as well as to ensure security, stability and development in Africa.
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> "Despite the important role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, experience has shown that there are

limits to the capacity and role of the Council in addressing the requirements of the transition from conflict to comprehensive development, particularly as it has repeatedly hesitated to open channels of genuine and effective coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant regional and subregional organizations.

"Consequently, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as an advisory intergovernmental forum for coordinating the efforts and roles of the organs and actors capable of contributing to peace consolidation was an important achievement for the United Nations and for Africa. Egypt, as the coordinator for the African Group in New York on that issue, supported the initiative and contributed to all stages of its realization. I am confident that the substance and conclusions of our discussions today will enrich the prospective discussions of the Peacebuilding Commission on Sierra Leone in particular, as well as its future thematic discussions relevant to peace consolidation in Africa in general.

"Allow me now to lay out Egypt's views on the elements proposed by you, Sir, as the focus of our discussions today, as contained in the valuable concept paper that was distributed earlier and on which I congratulate you.

"West Africa has undoubtedly entered a new phase in the settlement of the conflicts that hampered its potential over the past decade. The achievement in Sierra Leone in the past few years is a model for the convergence of the will of its people, together with their neighbours in other West African States, the African Union and the international community, as represented by the United Nations, the European Union and other partners. Equally encouraging are the confident steps taken by Liberia on the same path to peace and national reconciliation, which will enable it to achieve the required peace and stability.

"Moreover, we believe that with more international economic and technical support, Guinea-Bissau should witness increasing political stability and sustainable development. We are also confident that the wisdom and the will of the united people of Côte d'Ivoire will enable it to transcend its temporary plight with the help and support of the African Union. All those developments prove that West Africa is set to take a major political, security and economic leap, supported primarily by the firm resolve and resilience of its peoples and their aspirations to own their future and to espouse a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation, together with their efforts to reinforce the rule of law and the foundations of democracy and to expand their political and economic participation.

"Equally important is the need to address cross-border issues with implications for regional stability, such as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its links to the illegal exploitation of natural resources; the recruitment of mercenaries; improved settlement of the status and future of refuges; the settlement of land ownership disputes; and other issues that could fuel conflicts and wars in the subregion.

"To that end, we need to adopt a two-tiered integrated strategy for peacebuilding and peace consolidation. The first tier should focus on the direct and individual needs of the countries under consideration, while the second tier should address the needs of West Africa from a subregional perspective aimed at enhancing cooperation among the West African States in the areas of security and economic development and at supporting the pioneering role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in those areas.

"As for the direct needs of individual countries, the proposed peacebuilding strategy must emanate from a national vision presented by the country under consideration, depicting its own priorities in a manner that would allow for the most efficient coordination among the various contributing actors, with the aim of capitalizing on the existing political momentum and available resources. We expect the Peacebuilding Commission to play a lead role in ensuring such coordination. Moreover, past experience has shown that the point of departure for achieving sustainable peace is the institutional, human and legislative capacity-building of the country emerging from conflict, in parallel with the rehabilitation of public services, such as

education, health and security. We need to ensure parallel progress on both tracks of peacebuilding.

"I wish to emphasize, in that context, that the success of any regional or international effort is linked to the degree to which such efforts correspond to the nature and specificities of the country under consideration and to which they avoid the imposition of uniform models, concepts, approaches and ideas that do not take those specificities into account and that could be interpreted as an attempt to impose trusteeship on those countries, thus rendering all such efforts counterproductive to the objective of sustainable peace. Egypt insists that any approach to addressing the needs and requirements of countries emerging from conflict must reinforce national ownership of all peacebuilding activities and related concepts.

"Moving to the second tier of the integrated strategy, aimed at meeting subregional requirements for peace consolidation, we believe in the importance of further enhancing the roles played by the African Union and ECOWAS in the establishment of a system of security and integration based on respect for the sovereignty of States over their own territory, including measures to secure borders against the illicit trafficking of arms and other illegal commercial activities. In that respect, in cooperation with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa, from 17 to 19 June 2006, Egypt hosted a meeting of an international working group on combating the illicit exploitation of the non-natural resources in Africa. We believe that such measures must also include the initiation of an early warning system capable of containing conflicts by capitalizing on regional good offices, the completion of ongoing efforts to establish a stand-by force for the purposes of peacekeeping and rapid deployment, and enhancing cooperation in the area of exchange of information and experience on lessons learned from the management of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Other measures aimed at encouraging trade and facilitating movement across borders for the purpose of social and commercial exchange are also of immense significance.

"All such measures would also require strong support from the United Nations, the international financial institutions and the donor countries through the provision of technical and financial assistance, as well as other necessary expertise and support, to the African Union and ECOWAS in order to enable both organizations to discharge their roles in that sphere.

"Egypt maintains high-profile relations with all West African States and is committed to enhancing their capacity to achieve their national priorities and interests through existing bilateral mechanisms. The Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa is one important mechanism in that area and is currently preparing to support the reintegration programme in Liberia through small projects aimed at providing employment opportunities to demobilized elements and to contribute to security sector reform and capacity-building for the Liberian national police. Egypt remains prepared to support the efforts of its sisters and brothers in West Africa in their quest to build and consolidate comprehensive and sustainable peace that would fulfil their aspirations."

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Senegal, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased, Mr. President, along with offering you my sincere congratulations, to tell you how proud my delegation is to see you bringing the mark of African leadership to the Security Council during this month of August 2006, a month replete with threats, particularly due to the current upheavals in the Middle East.

In reiterating to you the unswerving support of your friend and brother, Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, Minister of State, who, because of urgent duties was unable to be with us today, as he would have wished, I should like on behalf of my delegation to congratulate you and, through you, your country, Ghana, so dear to my country, on the very timely choice of the theme of the discussion which brings us together today. I should like to convey respectful greetings to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Qatar and of Côte d'Ivoire, to the Secretary-General in the Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs of Guinea, to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and to the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General for West Africa, and to pay tribute to them for their outstanding contributions to this discussion. I am grateful to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Council for having authorized me to address you on behalf of my country, Senegal.

After decades of deadly upheavals that have beset a number of countries in West Africa, the subregion seems recently to be experiencing a return to social peace. Today, this normalization is to be seen in Liberia, in Sierra Leone and in Guinea-Bissau, which once seemed to be caught in an endless spiral of violence. In Côte d'Ivoire, a country which was known as a friendly, hospitable and stable country, the process of national reconciliation is now taking shape. Thus, the subregion is now enjoying favourable conditions where the diligent support of the international community would help to finally ground West Africa in a positive process of peace and common prosperity.

In order to achieve this noble objective, we must take the steps required by this favourable situation. I will now merely refer to four of these steps. The first step relates to consolidating confidence-building measures. In countries of the subregion that are emerging from conflict, where peace remains precarious and fragile, special attention needs to be given to the effectiveness of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. This exercise should include, to the extent possible, the integration into State institutions, including the army, of elements coming from various factions. That is particularly crucial because peace cannot be reduced merely to a cessation of hostilities and the conclusion of an agreement. Peace, above all, means cultivating mutual trust and undoing attempts to take recourse in violence. Clearly, the implementation of this strategy can work only with the substantial support of international donors and the full involvement of the new Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), and the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations.

The second step involves speeding up the process of integration. The efforts of ECOWAS to integrate member States must be strengthened. Achievements already made in this area are many and encouraging and are reflected at the ECOWAS level by an abundant juridical and institutional framework. Among other achievements, I would refer to the treaty that established the Community and its various protocols, in particular, the one relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, established in Lome in 1999, and the one relating to Democracy and Good Governance, adopted in Dakar in 2001.

The work of consolidating the achievements of the Community must take place through a proactive campaign so that peoples of the subregion internalize the ideals of ECOWAS and so that all States conform without delay to the spirit and the letter of the Community's rules. In this campaign, civil society and non-governmental organizations have a decisive role to play.

The third step is to promote the security-development tandem. More robust struggle is required to deal with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The illicit circulation of these weapons encourages the appearance of criminal gangs, either domestic or foreign, whose evil deeds undermine the very foundation of States and render fragile young nations under construction.

On this subject, I would recall the danger posed by mercenaries, a phenomenon that was strongly denounced a little less than three years ago in this very Chamber by Minister of State Gadio during an open debate on that question (see S/PV.4720). In order to ward off the danger of small arms and illicit light weapons and by their users, in 1998, ECOWAS adopted the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa, which has now become the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, supported by the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development, which benefits from support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The support of the international community for this programme is still needed to improve this vital sector of Community security.

But, make no mistake, poverty causes violence, as reflected in the shocking, unbearable image of young West Africans, overwhelmed by despair and forced to take set sail on the waters of the Atlantic aboard makeshift boats seeking some hypothetical better life. For many of them, the odyssey ends in tragedy. This distressing phenomenon is a reminder to our partners of the need to establish with West Africa more effective cooperation to convince young people

that life is also worth living in their own countries, which are so rich in economic possibilities.

Finally, the fourth step involves consolidating democracy and the rule of law. Efforts at the State level must be continued to further develop a democratic culture and the rule of law. All sectors of national life must participate in this sacred endeavour, primarily schools, civil society, non-governmental organizations, opinion-makers and the media.

With regard to the media, journalists need to be better trained and ethics committees must be established to avoid a situation where, because of irresponsibility or negligence, tension or conflicts are created, with devastating effects. Another participant in the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law should be the justice system which must be free and independent in a society where citizens who believe that their rights have been violated are able to have recourse to an ombudsman or to a State mediator in an environment where executive, legislative and judicial branches coexist and are strictly independent.

The normalization of the political situation in ECOWAS countries should not be considered to be irreversible — far from it. If we consider the classic case of Guinea-Bissau, we can see that lack of support from the international community at a crucial time, when the country needed to consolidate the achievements of peace quickly, led to the return of the demons of violence. That is a constant that applies to all countries emerging from conflict or crisis, whether they are in the West African subregion, elsewhere in Africa or in other parts of the world.

I reiterate my heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. President, for having organized this important debate. I venture to hope that your initiative will help to raise awareness with regard to the consolidation of peace and stability in West Africa.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): I would like to thank the Ghanaian presidency for having convened this timely open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa, a subject of the utmost importance for my country. I would like to extend our warmest greetings to you, Sir, Minister Nana Akufo-Addo, as you preside over the meeting.

I am also grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, and to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for their informative statements.

This Council meeting addresses two topics of particular interest to all of us: peacebuilding and Africa. Brazil has long held that lasting peace can be achieved in post-conflict situations only by means of the early implementation of concrete measures aimed at attaining social, economic and institutional development.

It is in the interests of the international community to contribute to the consolidation of peace in West Africa. Peace, security and development not only are crucial for the people in the region, but also help spread progress to a wider area in the continent. In that sense, Brazil considers the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic, which comprises countries from West Africa and South America, to be a valuable instrument in fostering peace and development and in promoting closer cooperation among countries on both sides of the ocean.

In recent years, countries in West Africa have been involved in a number of conflicts. But today, thanks to the return of peace, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau can aspire to enjoying economic growth and political stability; Côte d'Ivoire is making every effort to return to constitutional rule.

The stability of those countries, however, is fragile and requires continuous support. For this reason, the various United Nations missions in the region should be maintained and reinforced, and cooperation among them should open a new and dynamic process to tackle cross-border issues. Without neglecting the immediate humanitarian and security needs, the main task of the United Nations is to support long-term initiatives in West Africa that can produce a "virtuous cycle" of socio-political inclusion, sustainable development and peace, thereby preventing a relapse into violence and political instability.

That long-term effort must be predicated on the understanding that no peace is sustainable if the root causes of the conflict are not addressed, as rightly elaborated in the concept paper prepared for this debate (S/2006/610).

The countries in West Africa require the creation and reinforcement of capacity-building, which is essential for a prosperous and stable economy. In addition, cooperation among neighbouring countries is to be encouraged. We are of the view that, in the short run, two interrelated issues deserve special attention: the reduction of youth unemployment, and programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and for security sector reform.

Unemployment deprives young people of a legitimate source of income and makes them prey to warlords in their petty but bloody conflicts. Foreign investment and trade can help put the region back on the track of development. DDR programmes must have reliable resources in all of their phases and, when a peacekeeping operation is deployed, should rely on assessed resources for funding. To that list, one could add the use made of the natural resources of the region. It is important to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the proceeds of which are used to fuel war. The Kimberly Process has shown us the way ahead.

The newly established Peacebuilding Commission represents an important instrument for supporting the consolidation of peace in West Africa. We are happy that Sierra Leone will be considered in the country-specific configuration of the Commission. The Peacebuilding Commission has been created to garner resources and support in order to address the problems of countries in the rebuilding process. The Commission's work on Sierra Leone will certainly lead us to understand better the regional dynamics and the needs of other countries in the region.

In West Africa, the Brazilian Government considers that Guinea-Bissau deserves particular attention. That country has struggled to achieve stability, but its situation is fragile. The lack of economic growth remains a source of unrest, and State institutions sorely need to be supported and strengthened. The United Nations and its Member States should show, with practical deeds — as Brazil has tried to do — its solidarity with Guinea-Bissau. The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries and the India-Brazil-South Africa Forum are also assisting that country with projects that, we hope, will have a positive and immediate impact on the population.

It is important that the Council continue its quarterly review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and consider broadening its mandate. We firmly believe that investing a little more time and money in Guinea-Bissau now will spare suffering in the future and obviate the need to return after a hasty exit.

Brazil would like to pay tribute to the endeavours of the African Union in West Africa. I would also like to congratulate ECOWAS for its relentless efforts in the defence of peace and development in the area. In particular, I would like to express my Government's appreciation for the decision to transform the moratorium on small arms into a convention, which will represent a credible framework for action. We equally commend the contribution made by the United Nations Office for West Africa in drafting the convention.

My country has a special interest in the development of Africa, the source of the majority of the Brazilian population. The current administration of President Lula attaches high priority to strengthening relations with the African continent. We are committed to supporting all initiatives designed to make the West African countries prosperous and stable.

I believe that this debate provides further evidence of the relevant and active role of Ghana in building peace in the region. As President Lula said in welcoming President John Kufuor on his recent visit to Brazil,

> "for decades Ghana has been writing a fundamental page in the African saga. The heroic struggle of Kwame Nkrumah against colonialism, for the right of Africa to decide its destiny, enthused the continent and the world. Many Brazilians mirrored themselves in that example".

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of India, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Sen (India): It gives me great pleasure to participate in this open debate on the theme of peace consolidation in West Africa. This initiative of the Ghanaian presidency of the Security Council is timely and meaningful, and we welcome it. It was to be expected from a nation that has consistently made noteworthy contributions to peace, not only in its own region, but internationally as well. For me personally and for my country, it is an added pleasure to address the Foreign Minister of Ghana presiding today, given our traditionally close bilateral relations and our

experience of the wisdom and insight that Nana Akufo-Addo has always brought to any international forum he has graced with his presence. I have also been asked by our Minister of State, Anand Sharma, to convey to you, Sir, his personal greetings and warmest good wishes.

To save time, I shall not adhere entirely to my written text.

The history of conflict in West Africa has shown that stability can be imposed for a while by force of arms and the determined involvement of the world. But history also tells us that such stability is often short-lived. Peace achieved through force of arms is often, to quote the Secretary-General, a situation that is stable but fragile.

Indeed, recent World Bank studies emphasize that countries that have suffered conflict in the recent past are also likely to see conflict return: the risk that the country will fall back into conflict within the first five years of the end of a conflict is nearly 50 per cent. That worrisome statistic is made worse by the fact that armed conflict inevitably increases military expenditure in the countries involved. Such expenditure not only crowds out other public spending but, on a worldwide basis, has come to exceed spending on international development assistance. Furthermore, given the current international economic order, the advantages obtained through employment generation in parts of Africa have been squandered through negative resource flows, low commodity prices, a lack of access to international markets and the debt trap. In other words, global conditions make it likely that the vicious circle of conflict-peace-conflict becomes self-sustaining. Thus, the creation of peace has rarely ensured that peace will endure.

The overarching question before the world today is how to find ways to consolidate peace. In other words, how can regional organizations and the United Nations prevent States emerging from old conflicts from lapsing into new conflict situations? We agree that, in this context, we must promote sustained, equitable and employment-driven economic growth, as that is an inextricable part of the process of building durable peace. The effort to achieve these goals needs to be managed institutionally and driven internationally. It is this that gives relevance to the newly established Peacebuilding Commission.

We believe that conflict prevention must include operational prevention efforts, which include responses to immediate and pressing crises through preventive diplomacy and structural prevention, which implies long-term structural preventive measures to prevent crises from arising or prevent them from recurring. The latter often involves a long-term commitment to help vulnerable and poor countries develop human and institutional resources through increased development assistance. While peacebuilding focuses on preventing conditions that foster conflict, development focuses on the structural conditions that prevent growth and equity and thereby provide breeding grounds for conflict. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding must be part of the same continuum, if peacekeeping is to succeed.

Interestingly, studies show that military interventions in conflict-ridden areas are actually more expensive than preventive approaches. Estimates show that the international community spent approximately $200 billion on seven major interventions in the 1990s, while it is estimated that a successful preventive approach would have cost nearly $130 billion less.

Fundamental to a successful and long-term preventive approach are sound macroeconomic policies promoting sustained employment-driven growth. Expenditure on social sector programmes of poverty eradication, education — in particular the education of women — immunization and basic health and basic infrastructure creates conditions for sustained economic growth.

In that context, I am tempted to note that developing societies such as ours do not live on bread alone, but equally on solidarity. India and others have written off the debt of the seven highly indebted poor countries. India will continue its economic and scientific initiatives, such as the Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement (TEAM 9), which involves a concessional credit of $500 million along with technology transfers to countries in the West African region; further cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development; and the satellite and fibre-optic connectivity mission for the entire African continent, announced by our President.

Another essential pillar of the process of economic transformation involves the development of effective mechanisms to resolve social tensions arising from the legacy of conflict. Such mechanisms include rehabilitation, reconciliation and reconstruction. It also includes the development of credible institutions of governance; stable political structures, including

political parties; and credible strategies to effectively mobilize human and material resources. Hence the Peacebuilding Commission must not only work with the Security Council but also, and above all, take into consideration inputs from other United Nations bodies and work under the overall guidance of the General Assembly. Effective coordination and consultation with regional groups and organizations must be encouraged as part of that effort.

Another key element for peace consolidation is the development of an overall country strategy framework to deal with post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. What is crucial here is national ownership, as many speakers before me have pointed out. It is the only pragmatic answer to a practical problem. In order to ensure that peacekeeping blends into peacebuilding, it may occasionally be necessary to operate without clear-cut national authority. But, in spite of that, it is essential that embryonic national ownership be respected through clear guidelines for ascertaining and respecting the views of civil society and community representatives.

That brings me to good governance. Strong local, regional and national institutions are fundamental for societal transformation. Without legitimate laws, justice cannot be effective; without minimum standards of social equality, one cannot guarantee principles of justice and fairness. Thus, it is essential that good governance prescribed for recipient countries should also be practiced by the international institutions doing the prescribing. The two speakers before me pointed to success stories in, for example, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. We are engaged in Guinea-Bissau and, to some extent, in Sierra Leone. But it is also important to look at the recent past. There, one finds that — to cite one example in West Africa — Sierra Leone, which collapsed in civil war in 1990, was under an extensive International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme from 1994 to 1998. When civil war broke out again, it had spent 83 per cent of the period under an IMF programme. Therefore, the reform of international institutions — in particular the Bretton Woods institutions — to increase the voice and participation of developing countries is absolutely essential.

Lastly, it is essential that the process of peace consolidation be implemented at various levels. At one level, the Peacebuilding Commission will implement its mandate of proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery, ensuring predictable financing and developing best practices for cooperation among relevant actors and stakeholders. At another level, effective regional initiatives are essential. In that context, we fully support the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union in cooperating to address questions related to peace and security in West Africa. Finally, there is the national level, where it is essential that international institutions and partners support the efforts of countries emerging from conflict through highly concessional aid; debt waivers; assistance with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; employment generation strategies; and the extension of appropriate technologies. It is only through integrated action at all these levels that the consolidation of peace can be made effective and durable.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his attempt to respect the four-minute rule.

I now call on the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your delegation's presidency of the Security Council this month. We are convinced that you, both personally and as a representative of your country, will play an outstanding role in leading the work of the Council to success. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for his efforts as President of the Council last month. In addition, I cannot fail to associate myself with earlier speakers in thanking the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who made a very important statement to the Council this morning; Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa; and Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who have participated effectively in the debate on this agenda item.

I am speaking today on behalf of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shalghem, who is unable to take part in this important meeting. He has asked me, Sir, to express our gratitude to your friendly country, Ghana, for the initiative to debate the agenda item "Peace consolidation in West Africa".

My country's participation in this debate reflects its interest in the subject and its concern for strengthening international, regional and national efforts to build peace, security and stability in the West African countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. We consider those countries to be our sisters, and my country has special bilateral relationships with them. We are all members of the same regional integration organization, the African Union (AU), of which Libya was a founding member. Indeed, the AU has played a very important role in addressing many of the continent's problems, particularly those of West Africa.

This debate is of particularly critical importance given the destructive internal conflicts that have taken place in many countries of the region, including in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. These conflicts have led to a loss of control over those countries' national institutions and have resulted in a high death toll among innocent civilians. Indeed, they have destroyed infrastructure and property and have caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of those countries and has given rise to the illicit exploitation of their natural resources. These events have had a negative impact on economic, political and social life after a decade of conflict.

At long last, national leaders have been able to acknowledge that peace is the speediest and best way to settle these conflicts. My country has worked very hard at all levels, particularly at the leadership and ministerial levels, to find settlements to the conflicts in that region. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has joined in many international and regional efforts to that end. As an example, I would cite the donor conference that took place in Freetown under United Nations auspices at the beginning of 2002, as well as our participation in the joint initiative to rebuild Sierra Leone, which was launched in Tripoli in February 2002, and which led to the establishment of a joint fund for the reconstruction of Sierra Leone in the amount of $24 million. Another example is the 2002 campaign to destroy small arms and light weapons in Sierra Leone. These are very significant examples of our resolve to put an end to these conflicts.

With the cooperation and coordination of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations efforts have led to the establishment of peacekeeping and security operations in a number of West African countries.

We are optimistic about the political future of these countries, in particular in terms of the gradual transition from war and conflict to peacebuilding, reconstruction and stability. In that regard, we thank the Secretary-General for attaching such importance to the problems besetting the African continent, West Africa in particular. We share the concerns expressed today by the Secretary-General in his statement to the Council, in particular the weakness of good governance arrangements, which prevents these countries from benefiting properly from their natural resources. Yet, we see efforts being made on a daily basis to promote peace and security, notwithstanding the problems to which the Secretary-General has drawn attention. In our view, we can achieve lasting peace and security by building and promoting national institutions, particularly in areas such as security, democracy-building, the rule of law, human rights, the resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees, transparency in the establishment of better conflict management and settlement mechanisms and enhanced early warning systems designed to address conflict before it erupts. It can also be achieved by dealing with problems such as poverty and unemployment, which lead to the recruitment of young people into armed forces. International efforts should be stepped up to mobilize resources and financial and technical assistance that could make it possible to build peace, stability and sustainable development. This requires efforts by all States and regional and international institutions in order to ensure success.

In conclusion, I assure the Council that we are ready to contribute positively to efforts to establish lasting peace and security, not just in West Africa but throughout Africa, because bolstering peace and security in the continent is at the top of Libya's foreign policy priorities.

Mr. President, we thank you for convening this important meeting and wish the Council every success in the debate.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Sierra Leone, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): Mr. President, my delegation would like to join others in welcoming you to New York to chair this debate on the consolidation

of peace in West Africa, which is still one of the most volatile regions in the world in terms of peace and security. We regret that, due to unavoidable circumstances, my Foreign Minister was unable to attend and participate in this important meeting.

We note that virtually all the speakers in this debate have made reference to my country, Sierra Leone, including, just a few minutes ago, my colleagues, the Permanent Representative of India and the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We thank those who acknowledged the progress that we have made in becoming, perhaps, a model in post-conflict recovery.

Due to time constraints, I will try to summarize my statement.

Peacekeeping is an essential element, but not the only one in the process of creating the conditions for lasting peace in West Africa. Peacekeeping, in our view, must be undertaken in conjunction with peacebuilding, which has become synonymous with the consolidation of peace. In our view, the benefits of peacekeeping will be lost unless peacekeeping is accompanied by a comprehensive programme of measures for peace consolidation. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission, to which delegations have referred today, marks an acknowledgement of the necessity to build on the solid foundation laid by its peacekeepers, particularly those of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). We are grateful that Sierra Leone is one of the two post-conflict countries on the agenda of the Commission, and we hope that our sister republics of Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, which are also recovering from devastating armed conflict, will also be considered by the Commission in the not-too-distant future.

This morning, we heard several views on what constitutes the consolidation of peace. In our view, peace consolidation should not be seen merely as an effort to ensure that our countries do not slide back into conflict. The primary objective of the consolidation of peace, in our view, should be to attain sustainable development. This involves the mobilization of resources for economic and social reconstruction, including, of course, repairing the infrastructural and institutional damage resulting from conflict. The consolidation of peace, in our view, is a development exercise, one which must be seen and addressed in the context of our poverty alleviation programmes in the subregion.

We consider ECOWAS to be an important and effective instrument for the consolidation of peace as well as for peacekeeping in the subregion. In spite of its limited logistical and other resources, ECOWAS, through its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has already demonstrated its capacity to help keep the peace. Who can forget, for instance, the important role that ECOMOG played in Sierra Leone before the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces? We note also that the Security Council itself commended ECOMOG and ECOWAS for what they had done. It also took an unprecedented decision under Chapter VIII of the Charter to authorize ECOWAS to enforce an arms embargo against the rebel junta in Sierra Leone in 1997.

ECOWAS needs the support of the United Nations and the international community to fulfil its primary objectives of economic cooperation and integration aimed at ensuring sustainable development in its member States. We appeal to the United Nations and the international community to strengthen their relations with ECOWAS and its specialized agencies and programmes.

While it is the responsibility of each State in the subregion, including ours, to devise and implement policies and programmes aimed at the consolidation of peace and sustainable development, we strongly believe that the United Nations and the international community could make a tremendous contribution to our efforts by, first, mobilizing resources, as a matter of urgency, in support of the reconstruction and long-term development programmes of the countries of the subregion, most of which, including Sierra Leone, are among the least developed in the world; recognizing and responding to the linkage between the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and the maintenance and consolidation of peace; and recognizing the linkage between the consolidation of peace and the implementation of agreed guidelines and commitments in international trade and financing for development, including debt relief.

As we have witnessed, conflicts in the West African subregion have been exacerbated by cross-border movements of illegal small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, as well as of mercenaries. Many speakers, including my colleague

from Senegal, have referred to this today. Indeed, the hard-won peace in countries such as Sierra Leone is threatened by increasing flows of these weapons. The United Nations and the international community can contribute effectively to the consolidation of peace in the ECOWAS subregion also by intensifying efforts to eradicate the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, which have devastated the human and physical resources of the subregion.

I think it is a shame that the recent United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects collapsed last month. We were also disappointed that following its recent debate on small arms (see S/PV.5390), the Security Council did not adopt any resolution on the issue. Those facts do not augur well for the consolidation of peace in the ECOWAS subregion, which is awash with those illegal and deadly weapons. However, we trust that there will be a change of attitude when the matter is brought before the Council again.

Meanwhile, we look forward to the adoption of the draft presidential statement that will be issued at the close of this meeting.

The President: I thank the representative of Sierra Leone and the previous speaker for their respect for the four-minute rule.

The next speaker is the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Chaderton Matos (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council. Your country, Ghana, has been a pioneer in the history of liberation and the consolidation of Africa as a region of free States.

Our commitment to international social justice and our sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters of West Africa prompt us to support initiatives and programmes to enhance cooperation within the United Nations system, not only to eliminate real or potential causes of war but also to consolidate peace in the region: peace that will generate freedom, growth and justice — and vice versa, in a virtuous circle.

Lasting peace and sustainable development are complementary and mutually inclusive terms. In its process of historic democratic institutional and social change, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has deepened and broadened its relations with Africa based on a foreign policy that draws upon our African roots to develop a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. For us, rhetoric has been outpaced by events. In recent years, President Hugo Chávez and other high Venezuelan officials have frequently visited Africa. Thus far, we have more than doubled the number of Venezuelan embassies in the continent; we have created a unit within our Ministry for Foreign Affairs, headed by a Deputy Minister, dealing exclusively with that friendly and fraternal continent. This ideological, political and spiritual commitment was highlighted by the participation of our head of State in the African Union (AU) summit held at Bajul.

We have moved forward in applying the principles of solidarity and complementarity through tangible, productive actions such as the signing of cooperation agreements with Benin, the Gambia, Libya, Mali and the Sudan, as well through measures in support of specific programmes in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. We have worked with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, to support the efforts of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Togo. Further examples include our support for the programme for woman and young people in the Sahelian region; agreements on energy cooperation with Mali and Senegal; and tripartite education and health projects among Venezuela, Cuba and Africa, which are to be put in place by the end of this year. In Venezuela, we have established institutions such as the following: African Friendship House, created in an area with a large population of African descent; a regional study centre for African historical heritage; and an educational cooperation programme with Mali, which is open to grant-holders from that country. That is the practical, peaceful way in which we contribute to international peace and security.

Extreme poverty is the greatest threat to peace. Half of the world's population survives on less than two dollars a day, and some 1.2 billion people live on barely one dollar. That is both a potential and a real source of political destabilization and social disintegration. Hunger and the lack of health care and

education trigger violence which the most powerful have come to meet with the ultimate response of further violence: war.

We believe that, last year, we lost an important opportunity to reverse those trends when we failed to address the economic and social elements of the Goals adopted at the Millennium Summit. The Bolivarian Government of Venezuela is looking to the South for new responses to old questions that we have sought to resolve, questions imposed from the North. At present, we are developing projects such as Televisora del Sur (TeleSUR) to provide free and accurate information that will show the other side of the coin, as well as projects such as the Banco del Sur, the Universidad del Sur and Petrosur: areas in which African nations can work together with us.

We are focusing priority attention on education, which is a basic tool for the liberation of peoples. UNESCO has verified that Venezuela is now free of illiteracy. Now, we are freer, and we want to share our experiences.

We must support the countries of West Africa in their democratic progress towards peace, respect for human rights and development. That requires continued commitment on the part of the international community. We encounter specific problems in West Africa, including poverty, famine, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the role of women, the reintegration of child soldiers and the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Those issues need to be addressed together with the development of political democracy. We support the initiatives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), launched by the African Union in 2001, which addressed the primary responsibilities of the peoples and Governments of Africa in defining their economic growth and their sustainable development.

My country hopes that the General Assembly will be able to establish machinery, whereby nations that make contributions to promoting the development of African countries can present voluntary reports concerning their achievements. Venezuela reaffirms its concern for the well-being of our brothers and sisters, the peoples of Africa, which will only be possible if their most pressing needs are met in the framework of complete freedom and the full enjoyment of human rights.

At the same time, it is essential for the international community to give all the support requested in order to ensure that African nations have direct control over their political and economic processes, in keeping with the principle of the self-determination of peoples.

The United Nations Charter was crafted in order to ensure respect and enjoyment of such principles and to pave the way to peace, not to allow war to prevail.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): For years, West Africa has been riven with violent internal conflicts. Recently, however, the political instability that has afflicted the region for so long has, for the most part subsided, and peace processes have been making steady progress.

In Liberia, under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, laudable progress is being made in rebuilding the country. Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau have likewise transitioned from war to constitutional Government. And in Côte d'Ivoire, the peace roadmap established by the International Working Group is in place, and all Ivorian parties reached an agreement in Yamoussoukro last month on significant commitments for peace.

Despite those positive political developments, the region still faces daunting challenges, including massive cross-border refugee flows, slow economic growth, low inflows of foreign direct investment, heavy debt burdens and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Achieving lasting peace and security in the region will take considerable effort.

I would like to stress three steps that are, in our view, vital to the consolidation of peace in the region: first, taking a regional approach; secondly, focusing on the peacebuilding process and thirdly, addressing the root causes of conflicts.

First, my delegation believes that peace consolidation in West Africa needs to be pursued on a regional basis. The peoples and countries in the region are closely interlinked, which means that ensuring peace and security in one country necessitates close cooperation with its neighbours. This regional approach can best be carried out through regional organizations. In that regard, we appreciate and support the continuing role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in maintaining peace and security in the region, both through its own

initiatives and in collaboration with the United Nations.

Secondly, peace and security in West Africa requires a focus, not just on peacemaking and peacekeeping, but also on peacebuilding efforts. As the Secretary-General aptly put it, security in the region is stable but fragile. The first post-conflict years are the most dangerous, as wounded societies walk the tightrope from chaos and violence to sustainable peace and stability. If West Africa is to avoid falling into the abyss of renewed conflict, it will need support for new institutions, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts and economic recovery, among others. In that regard, we believe that the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in providing guidance and in coordinating the efforts of the Security Council, ECOWAS and other regional and United Nations bodies that will be engaged in the region.

Thirdly, to prevent new crises and the recurrence of conflict, it is important to address the root causes of instability in West Africa. Regional, ethnic and socioeconomic tensions in the region have been immensely destructive to infrastructure, caused mass migrations of refugees and have led to the exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of combatants rather than societies. To prevent renewed conflict, long-term economic and social development strategies need to be formulated and implemented with the assistance of the international community. Sustained attention and commitment by the international community will be crucial.

The Republic of Korea has actively participated in international efforts to help the development of African countries. The plan to double our official development assistance by 2009 is part of our commitment to assist African development. We hope that the era of West African conflict will be followed by an era of peace, prosperity and renewal.

The President: I now call on the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): First of all, I want to thank you, Sir, and members of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to address the Council on peace consolidation in West Africa. This is an issue that is of critical importance, not only to my country and the subregion, but also to the entire African continent.

I also wish to congratulate Ghana, a close and brotherly country from our subregion, for presiding over the affairs of the Council during the month of August, and on a day when the issue of peace consolidation in West Africa is being discussed. I feel particularly happy to observe that you, Honourable Minister, are personally chairing this meeting and wish you a pleasant visit in New York.

I seize this opportunity, too, to express Nigeria's gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuing interest and tireless efforts towards the resolution of conflicts and consolidation of peace in our subregion.

Until recently, West Africa had the unenviable record of being an unstable subregion in Africa. It was threatened by a series of conflicts, the longest being the conflict in Liberia. I am happy to note that the record is gradually being reversed with the recent election of democratic Governments in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea Bissau. Those gains were possible through the efforts of our leaders, who had resolved that the subregion could no longer continue to be the theatre of unending fratricidal wars. In that connection, the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been exemplary and highly commendable. In addition, the understanding and cooperation of the leaders of the African Union and of this body contributed in no small measure to the growing peace in our subregion.

I must also point out that the handing over of former President Charles Taylor to the Special Court in Sierra Leone greatly contributed to the easing of tension and opened a new chapter for the consolidation of peace and security in our subregion. Mr. Taylor's arrest and subsequent transfer to the International Criminal Court in The Hague served as a strong message to both present and future actors on the West African scene that it is no longer business as usual. It further encouraged our partners that hope is not lost for transforming the subregion into a region of peace, progress and economic prosperity.

In spite of those gains, however, the challenges of peace consolidation in our subregion are enormous. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire remains of serious concern to us. The possible spillover effects of the Ivorian conflict cannot be overstated. Furthermore, peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau remains fragile. The Governments of those countries

have to contend daily with the threat of relapsing into crisis because of the daunting challenges they have to contend with.

We cannot, therefore, consolidate peace in West Africa without addressing some urgent issues. First, the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons deserves greater and urgent attention. The unrestrained access to those weapons by individuals and groups is, without doubt, a major threat to peace. Those weapons have proved to be a great disincentive to non-State actors to follow the path of peace through negotiations. On our own, we are constrained as members of ECOWAS and the African Union from effectively countering the consequences of the proliferation of those weapons.

Secondly, the opportunities for economic growth and development need to be enhanced. Like most developing countries, the countries of our subregion are saddled not only with the visible consequences of conflicts, human rights abuses and poor governance, but also with the state of our economies. That has worsened the level of poverty and unemployment among our youth. The spectre of youth unemployment and its potential negative impact on our social fabric, peace, stability and security are indicative of the scope of the challenges facing the subregion.

Finally, the question of capacity-building and institutional support requires no less urgent attention. The countries of our region, particularly those emerging from conflict, require urgent support to build and strengthen their institutions of governance, dispensation of justice, protection of human rights, and promotion of health and educational services. It is in that regard that we consider the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and its ongoing work as a genuine contribution to peace consolidation in our subregion and look forward to the early translation of the Commission's work into concrete action in Sierra Leone.

It is therefore our hope that this debate will strengthen the resolve of the international community, including that of this body, to take concrete steps towards further assisting the countries of our subregion and removing the obstacles to a durable and sustainable peace in West Africa.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Norway, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Enge (Norway): The Norwegian Government very much appreciates your initiative, Sir, in convening this open debate in the Security Council on peace consolidation in West Africa. We are pleased to see that West Africa has made considerable progress on peace and security in recent years.

In Liberia, Africa's first female president and her Government have taken decisive and courageous steps towards reconstruction and recovery. We commend Liberia for requesting that former President Charles Taylor be turned over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. A society ravaged by war cannot be healed unless those responsible for crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law are held responsible. Sierra Leone's request to be included on the agenda of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission is also important. It can help speed up the process of reconstruction and recovery in preparation for the 2007 elections.

Those achievements are commendable, but fragile. Many West African countries face enormous challenges, such as in Côte d'Ivoire, where the precarious situation continues to threaten the stability of the region. The international community must continue its support for consolidating peace in West Africa. Broad, consistent and long-term assistance to regional organizations is crucial. It is in our common interest to provide financial support for Governments that struggle to enhance security, promote national reconciliation and build peace in their societies.

The Norwegian Government will increase its support for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction in West Africa. Norway has provided post-conflict support to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. This year, Norway plans to provide approximately $27.5 million for humanitarian relief, peacebuilding and reconstruction activities in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Norway has over the years given priority to development assistance to African nations. We also support efforts by African Governments and work closely with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other regional organizations in Africa. Their leadership is crucial in building capacity for stronger engagement in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace operations and peacebuilding on the African continent.

Allow me to highlight a few of the issues raised in the comprehensive concept paper put forward by the Government of Ghana.

It is important to support efforts for more regional cooperation. It is also crucial to address cross-border issues that could fuel conflicts and increase tensions. We would welcome the early ratification and implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms as a key to progress here. The progress achieved by ECOWAS in developing a regional standby force for peace operations is impressive. In particular, the Norwegian Government would like to commend ECOWAS for taking the lead in developing the civilian components of the African Standby Force, including humanitarian capacity.

As part of our long-standing cooperation with African partners under the Training for Peace programme, Norway has worked with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Institute to assist ECOWAS in developing West African civilian capacity for peacekeeping operations. The use by ECOWAS of its Peace Fund for programmes of cooperation in conflict-prone border areas deserves active international support. Norway is about to enter into an agreement with ECOWAS to provide financial assistance to the ECOWAS Peace Fund and to the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme.

The importance of the transparent and accountable management of natural resources and the establishment of oversight bodies needs to be emphasized. Several countries in West Africa have endorsed the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and are on their way to implement the EITI principles. That is a key contribution to build lasting peace and stability. We encourage and support further EITI implementation efforts in West Africa and look forward to broad West African participation at the third plenary EITI conference, which is scheduled to take place in Oslo, Norway, on 16 and 17 October this year.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): We congratulate Ghana on its assumption of the Council presidency for this month. We are confident, Sir, that, under your country's leadership, the Council will find its way to silencing the guns in the Middle East and elsewhere. May I also felicitate Ambassador De la Sablière and the French delegation on last month's intense and important presidency of the Council.

We welcome your presence here, Sir, to preside over this important meeting of the Security Council. We also welcome the participation of other dignitaries in this meeting.

Africa, afflicted for years by conflict, disease and poverty, justifiably occupies a significant segment of the Security Council's work. Today's discussion is relevant and timely, especially in the context of significant strides that have been made in recent years for peace and stability in West Africa. Sadly, that is not the case when it comes to some other situations around the world, such as in the Middle East.

Sierra Leone is a United Nations peacekeeping success story. It is now engaged in peace consolidation. We trust that the Peacebuilding Commission will reinforce this process.

Liberia is on the road to recovery and stability from the horrors of the cruel conflict and crimes we witnessed three years ago. Liberia and its leadership deserve the full support of the Council and the world community in sustaining stability, reviving its economy and respecting human rights.

We hope to see similar progress in Côte d'Ivoire. That would enable this important African country to serve once again as the economic hub of West Africa.

Pakistan enjoys friendly and fraternal relations with the countries of West Africa. We have made our modest contributions to the United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts in West Africa. Pakistan takes pride in its participation in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). We now look forward to contributing to Sierra Leone's reconstruction through our membership in the Peacebuilding Commission. Our troops are serving in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in support of peace in that country. We are also participating in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

During this meeting, our African brothers have expressed their perspectives and priorities regarding the problems of West Africa. The Security Council should heed their voices. Indeed, the important issues outlined in the presidency's non-paper for this debate, have been the subject of frequent discussions in the work of the Council.

During Pakistan's tenure on the Security Council, we were able to acquire a greater understanding of the situation in West Africa. In May 2004, Pakistan, as Council President, organized a public meeting on complex crises and the United Nations response. A summary of the important ideas and suggestions advanced in that debate was circulated as document S/2004/723 and may be worth revisiting.

Most of the situations in Africa are complex crises. They require a combination of actions — conflict prevention and resolution to begin with, and, later, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. In view of the linkage between security and development, the newly established Peacebuilding Commission will, we hope, be able to focus on the multifaceted aspects of recovery and peacebuilding in country-specific situations. Pakistan will contribute actively to its work.

Despite the progress achieved in West Africa, considerable work remains to be accomplished, especially in addressing the root causes of conflicts. What we have often referred to as the "politics of poverty and scarcity" characterizes most of these internal conflicts. The politics of scarcity and poverty must be ended. In this context, greater political will is required to break the link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the illegal trade of arms, which so often spark and sustain the conflicts in Africa. More attention must still be given to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration (DDRR) and to security sector reform. And it is clear that laying the foundation for sustainable development will require, apart from direct international assistance and debt relief, better terms of trade, larger trade capacity and greater trade access.

A heartening feature of the West African developments is the regional approach being adopted to address its problems, especially cross-cutting issues — small arms, mercenaries, refugees, migrants, et cetera. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has proved itself a competent and reliable partner for peace in this region. Its leadership merits acclaim. Pakistan fully supports your call, Mr. President, and that of Executive Secretary Ibn Chambas, to address the capacity and resource constraints of ECOWAS.

A comprehensive regional approach could also open greater possibilities for the resolution of security, peacebuilding and development challenges in other parts of the world that are today riven by rampant war, occupation and destruction.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and, again, for his respect of the four minute rule. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Niger, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Abani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like in taking the floor to convey to you the congratulations of the delegation of Niger on the work that has been so ably accomplished under the Ghanaian presidency of this body, work that I am sure will ultimately lead us to concrete results at a time when several equally crucial challenges face us, challenges which it is your daunting but very inspiring task, Mr. President, to manage throughout this month of August.

I should also like to say, Mr. President, that the delegation of Niger is pleased about the theme that you chose for this open debate and for good reason. Peace consolidation is indeed a challenge to our subregion because our capacity to consolidate peace in our subregion will determine the fate of all of our initiatives. The regional economic programme, where we enjoy a partnership with institutions and friendly countries, can only be successful if we create an environment where peace, security, good governance, human rights, combating corruption, protecting the environment, education and health are solidly established.

The question of peace and security in West Africa was soon seen as being one of the major problems facing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which immediately proceeded to strengthen its legal arsenal by adopting instruments that would help to resolve those problems.

Today, just looking at West Africa alone, we note a significant improvement in the peace and security situation in the subregion. Liberia has just achieved an outstanding success with its presidential elections, with the crucial assumption of power by the first woman at the head of an African State. Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau are now gradually building a newly refound peace, and their situation deserves more than ever to benefit from the support of the international community, in particular, that of the new Peacebuilding Commission, in their efforts to build stable nations with a focus on national rebuilding. Côte d'Ivoire,

likewise, enjoys the support and assistance of the international community, and it deserves the continued unwavering support of the international community for the efforts it is making.

I should also say, Mr. President, that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, nor is the absence of conflict synonymous with peace. Indeed, situations such as food insecurity and endemic poverty in some of the countries of the West African subregion often lead to the displacement of persons and to irredentist movements, and can thus threaten peace, just as the burden of debt and institutional deficiencies can also constitute similar dangers to peace and jeopardize the development of the West African subregion.

As I said before, Mr. President, your choice of this theme was, for us, a very wise one, because here in the United Nations these same concerns are still with us, as shown in the fact that the World Summit Outcome called upon all of us to establish the Peacebuilding Commission, a body which, unlike the plenary summit recommendations, enjoyed the active support of a rather broad consensus, which meant that it could be established in a relatively short period of time.

Now that we have this mechanism, which should help us to consolidate peace by assisting countries that are emerging from conflict, it is essential that the new institution fully play its role. It is also essential that we think about how to make that body as effective as possible.

In that regard, it is essential that the countries concerned first proceed to build up the capacity of their national institutions. Here, one of the problems facing West African countries is the absence of — or insufficient access to — justice, because judges are overburdened. This results in delays in the administration of justice. Similarly, when it comes to controlling and punishing criminal activities, deficiencies are resulting in breaches of the peace and a breakdown of security in our countries.

The circulation of small arms and light weapons has led to the emergence of warlords, who have taken advantage of institutional weaknesses within States to establish their rule, which is based on chaos and desolation.

My delegation once again congratulates the heads of State of the subregion, who have transformed their Moratorium into a legally binding Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials. The national control commissions responsible for the collection of small arms and light weapons which have been set up in most ECOWAS countries should be congratulated, because they have spearheaded the work that has led to the major normative progress that has been made in West African countries aimed at combating the illicit traffic in small arms.

My delegation also believes that the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance is an irreplaceable instrument that should be welcomed, since it has facilitated increased mobilization by countries of the subregion in situations where peace is threatened, particularly during unconstitutional changes of power. That ambitious Protocol on Good Governance provides for concrete actions, not least against countries that are conspicuously lacking when it comes to good governance. It is an instrument that should be kept strong in the interests of peace consolidation in West Africa. That instrument, which, when it was adopted, was considered revolutionary, is today a tool that should be promoted and disseminated, because it has deterrent potential when it comes to preserving good governance.

Another important mechanism that West Africa must make its own in the interests of peace consolidation is the African Peer Review Mechanism, which was initiated within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. That innovative mechanism is a kind of reward for good governance and peace at the regional and international levels, and its impact can only strengthen African Governments and their peoples in their nation-building efforts, which, as we know, can be fruitful only in a climate of peace and security.

Accordingly, the countries of the West African subregion are, in the main, participating in economic reform programmes in the context of bilateral and multilateral partnerships. While we appreciate the crucial contribution of those partners, in terms of both support for the economy and multifaceted efforts to combat poverty, such partnerships must give top priority to national ownership of policies and programmes by the countries concerned. It is also true that the search for effective partnerships — when these have a strictly economic orientation — could upset the fragile balance of peace and security, particularly in the

poorest countries. For example, we know that social unrest can be caused by a sudden sharp increase in certain taxes or in the price of essential goods. While that might seem normal in some situations, in other cases it could jeopardize peace and security.

My point is that, in countries where everything is fragile, peace too is inevitably precarious, and that the particular situation of each area must be taken into account. Countries emerging from conflict should therefore be given the special attention that they deserve within the Peacebuilding Commission.

In this regard, the approach taken by the Commission — to consider all the aspects of the work that needs to be done to help countries to consolidate peace by providing for the participation of financial institutions — is extremely important. The Commission must, however, fully implement the existing cooperation frameworks between West Africa and the African Union on the one hand, and West Africa and the United Nations on the other. That global partnership for peace is already quite prominent in the fundamental ECOWAS texts, and, as has been rightly noted by the United Nations, which provides for active involvement by the regional economic communities in peace consolidation, that should be emphasized and further refined.

Those are my delegation's comments on this extremely important topic that you, Sir, wisely chose for discussion in this body. I would like to conclude by reiterating my delegation's support for the draft presidential statement that you have prepared.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Liberia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Eesiah (Liberia): I should like at the outset to join previous speakers in welcoming you, Sir, as you preside over this meeting, attended by foreign ministers of the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). I bring you greetings and felicitations from Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and from the Government and the people of Liberia, and I congratulate you on my own account. Let me also take this opportunity to thank you for having convened this Security Council open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa.

His Excellency Ambassador George W. Wallace, Foreign Minister of Liberia, would have very much loved to participate in these deliberations, but, owing to current developments in Liberia, he was not able to be here.

Liberia, which has experienced more than 14 years of civil war, welcomes this open debate aimed at finding equitable solutions to the many problems affecting the West African subregion. We know too well the magnitude of these problems and the devastating effect they have on the youth of our country. The conflicts have not only killed thousands of our people, but have also brought about economic deprivation and political instability in the subregion.

There is no doubt that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the European Union, the United States of America, the United Nations, the international community and non-governmental organizations, as well as peace-loving countries, made tremendous sacrifices to bring about peace in Liberia, thereby successfully resolving years of civil war, which left the country devastated and in total ruins.

It is the view of my delegation that Liberia is ready to support and implement the draft presidential statement to be adopted later in this ministerial-level meeting, aimed at promoting sustainable economic development and putting in place a viable mechanism and measures to stop the cross-border recruitment of child soldiers in the subregion.

The Liberian delegation believes that that cross-border recruitment is one of the most serious problems affecting our region, and every effort must be made to put an end to it immediately.

The Liberian delegation is, therefore, appealing to you, Mr. President, and to this ministerial meeting to make it an extreme priority to implement the decision of this meeting in order to stop the importation of weapons into the subregion, which has robbed it of its young people.

My delegation would like to pay special tribute to the Mano River Union, ECOWAS and the African Union for their tireless efforts to help bring about the peace that Liberia is enjoying today. We request those organizations to consolidate that hard-won peace by encouraging and promoting economic and employment opportunities for the people of the subregion.

The President: I thank the representative of Liberia for respecting our rule.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, to respond briefly to comments made.

Mr. Ould-Abdallah (*spoke in French*): I should like to make only four points.

I think it is extremely important to insist once again that the unemployment among young people in West Africa poses a great threat to the stability of countries, as a number of speakers have said. It is also a threat to the bilateral relations between the region and its closest neighbours, particularly in Western Europe. In all of these countries, the immigration of young people is also an issue.

Secondly, the Security Council should discuss how to find the best way to support the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in 2007 in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. It is a period of tension — tension that must be prevented.

Thirdly, there are democratic countries such as yours, Mr. President — stable countries such as Mali and Niger, which at the same time are fragile countries exposed to drought and other unpredictable events. They respect the law and the rights of their citizens. How can we help them to strengthen their capacities?

My last point is that African public opinion is better informed. Today, I circulated a little radio that cost $1, bought in Africa — a radio that all Africans can buy. My generation could not buy one for less than $50. Therefore, Security Council debates are followed closely by all African countries in crisis, thanks to FM radio, so we must be increasingly mindful of public opinion in Africa, particularly West Africa. It is aware of the messages that the Council can send it.

The President: I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah for his comments and, once again, for his gift.

After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council, recalling its relevant resolutions and the statements of its President, stresses the importance of addressing the issue of peace consolidation in West Africa in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. It recognizes the need for such an approach for durable solutions to the conflicts in West A and to explore ways and means to pro sustainable peace, security and development.
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> "The Security Council welcomes transition from war to democratic rule in S Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, as wel current efforts aimed at implementing meas leading to free and fair elections in Côte d'Iv It also notes that the security situation in t countries remains generally stable but fragile.
>
> "The Security Council stresses the nee build the capacity of national institutions address the root causes of conflict as an esse part of peace consolidation, especially in areas of political and economic governance well as the rule of law and the fight aga impunity.
>
> "The Security Council recalls the meas it has implemented on the illegal exploitatio natural resources in the region and encoura member States of the Economic Community West African States (ECOWAS) to pro transparent and sustainable exploitation of s resources.
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> "The Security Council stresses the prim role of each West African Government in pe consolidation for the benefit of all citizens reiterates the importance of all leaders work together for peace and security in the region.
>
> "The Security Council considers that ill trafficking in small arms and light weapons s poses a threat to peace and security in the reg In this connection, it welcomes the decision ECOWAS member States to transform Moratorium on the Import, Export Manufacture of Light weapons into a bind Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapo Their Ammunition and Other Related Materi It further urges all States, both within and outs the region, to ensure compliance with its exist arms embargoes in West Africa and for Sta within ECOWAS to ratify the Convention as so as possible to enable it to come into eff promptly.
>
> "The Security Council considers that ci society, including women's organizations, has role to play in supporting peace consolidati

initiatives in the region and that their efforts in this regard deserve to be supported as appropriate.

"The Security Council underlines the crucial importance of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, taking into account the special needs of child soldiers and women, and encourages the international community to work in close partnership with the countries concerned. It further affirms the need to find lasting solutions to the problem of youth unemployment in order to prevent the recruitment of such youth by illegal armed groups.

"The Security Council considers reform of the security sector an essential element for sustainable peace and stability in West Africa and urgently calls on the donor community and the international financial institutions to coordinate their efforts to support the States concerned.

"The Security Council stresses the continued need for assisting West African States and ECOWAS to curb illicit cross-border activities.

"The Security Council reiterates the importance of finding effective solutions to the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region and urges the States in the region, in collaboration with relevant international organizations and donor countries, to create the necessary conditions for their voluntary and safe return.

"The Security Council welcomes the positive role played by the international community and civil society in addressing the humanitarian situation in many parts of the region and urges them to provide adequate resources as part of a coordinated humanitarian response strategy to improve the human security of the people of West Africa in need of such protection.

"The Security Council stresses the need to ensure improved coordination of donor initiatives in order to make the best use of available resources, as well as encourages donor partners to redeem their pledges in a timely manner.

"The Security Council further stresses the need for continued and enhanced cooperation between the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union in peace consolidation initiatives, based on an integrated approach and with the aim of maximizing the use of available resources.

In this connection, it commends the role of the United Nations Office in West Africa, as well as other United Nations offices, missions and agencies in the region in facilitating, in close cooperation with the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and its member States, the achievement of peace and security priorities of the region. It further encourages the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the United Nations missions in the region to continue their efforts in coordinating United Nations activities to ensure their improved cohesion and maximum efficiency.

"The Security Council underscores the importance and the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in assisting countries emerging from conflict to achieve sustainable peace and stability.

"The Security Council emphasizes the regional dimension of peace and security in West Africa and requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the ECOWAS secretariat, to submit to it by the end of the year a report with recommendations on the cooperation between the United Nations missions deployed in the region and on the cross-border issues in West Africa."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2006/38.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.